

TOWN OF ROCKY HILL

761 OLD MAIN STREET ROCKY HILL, CT 06067

SILAS DEANE HIGHWAY REVITALIZATION

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

AUGUST 2006

A Financial Assistance Program for Commercial Property Owners on the Silas Deane Highway in Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Introduction

The Town of Rocky Hill has partnered with the Town of Wethersfield to establish a Revitalization Agenda for the Silas Deane Highway. This agenda includes the provision of a Façade Improvement Grants Program to improve the aesthetics of the Silas Deane Highway. The Town of Rocky Hill believes that the creation and maintenance of attractive building facades is important to the economic health of the Town. The condition, image and appearance of business buildings play a large part in the impression which businesses, residents and visitors have of the Silas Deane Highway. When neglected, business buildings create an image of a deteriorating economic base.

In an attempt to improve the aesthetics and strengthen the economic vitality of the Silas Deane Highway, the Town of Rocky Hill will provide incentive financing to stimulate façade improvements and reinvestment to commercially owned real estate in accordance with program guidelines. Commercial property owners and tenants may be eligible for a 75% rebate of the cost of eligible exterior building façade and site improvements, up to a maximum of \$50,000, as funds are available.

This program is funded with STEAP funds from the State of Connecticut, administered through the State Department of Community and Economic Development.

Program Purpose

The primary purpose of the Façade Improvement Program is to improve the appearance of the Silas Deane Highway and beautify the area to increase patronage to businesses. Additionally the program will also work to achieve the following:

- Leverage private investment on the Silas Deane Highway.
- Stabilize and increase property values.
- Create a cohesive commercial neighborhood straddling the town of Rocky Hill & Town of Wethersfield.
- Spur further development on the Silas Deane Highway.
- Increase sales volume of local businesses.

Eligible Property Types

Any property, which contains a commercial or retail use and is located on the Silas Deane Highway between exit 24 of I-91 and the intersection of Dividend Road, is eligible for the program.

Projects will be funded on a first come first serve basis, as funds are available. The following types of properties are not eligible:

- 1. Properties which are expected to undergo demolition.
- 2. Properties which are not utilized or are not planned to be utilized for retail or commercial uses.
- 3. Buildings which are determined to be physically unsound by the Façade Coordinator and Chief Building Official.
- 4. Buildings which are exempt from property taxes such as church owned buildings used for religions purposes.

Required Periods of Ownership and Recapture Provisions

- A. Applicants receiving rebate awards will be expected to sign a Letter of Agreement with the Town which outlines the specific conditions of the rebate and the applicant's commitments. The Letter of Agreement will be filed in the Town of Rocky Hill Land Records.
- B. Rebates are forgiven on a pro-rated monthly basis (or portion thereof) over a seven (7) year period based upon the amount of the rebate.
- C. If the property is sold prior to three (3) years following reimbursement by the Town of Rocky Hill, then the entire amount of the rebate shall become immediately due and payable to the Town. Exceptions may be made, with the approval of the Façade Committee, for property transfers not considered sales (including, but not limited to, dissolution of a partnership and transfers pursuant to a will or an estate). Failure to return all rebate funds to the Town shall be grounds for the Town Manager to file a lien against the subject property and initiate legal action.
- D. Owners who sell their property subject to a façade rebate after three (3) years but prior to seven (7) years after reimbursement by the Town shall be required to repay the outstanding

rebate balance as specified in item B. above. Failure to return remaining rebate funds to the Town shall be grounds for the Town to file a lien against the subject property and initiate legal action.

General Parameters

- A. Under a Letter of Agreement, the Town of Rocky Hill (under the authority of the Façade Committee) will rebate 75% of eligible costs for eligible façade improvements up to a maximum of \$50,000 per property. The applicant will be responsible for the remaining 25%.
- B. The rebate will apply to the expense of materials, design services and wages for a renovation project and will not apply to the cost of borrowing or for permit fees.
- C. The rebate will apply to projects which secure bank financing and to projects which are self-financed.
- D. Should the façade improvement require structural engineering design, those may be considered costs upon Committee approval.

Other Program Requirements

- **A.** If, during the seven (7) seven year period following reimbursement by the Town, the property owner (including any new property owner(s) subsequent to reimbursement by the Town) undertakes any further exterior work on the property, such work shall conform to the Design Guidelines and shall be approved by the Facade Committee. Failing to comply with this provision may cause the remaining percentage of the rebate to become immediately due and payable at the option of the Façade Committee and Town Manager.
- B. The undersigned agrees to keep in good state of repair all exterior improvements undertaken through the program.
- C. The property owner agrees to permanently remove all billboards and signs not directly related to the occupancy of the buildings.
- D. The property owner shall pay all taxes and assessments on the subject property and shall keep in good state of repair, all buildings or personal property subject_to a façade rebate. The subject property shall be insured against loss by fire or otherwise in such forms of insurance as may be required by the Façade Committee and the Director of Finance.
- E. The building(s) must be in general good condition as deemed by appropriate Town of Rocky Hill Staff.
- F. No owner may be delinquent in the payment of any Town taxes. In the case of multiple owners with several properties, taxes must be current on all properties owned by every owner including taxes on motor vehicles and/or personal property.

- G. The rebate recipient(s) must be the owner(s) of the property or retail or commercial tenants of the building. All owners with an interest in the property must sign the facade application and Letter of Agreement.
- H. Property owners who receive financial assistance from the Town of Rocky Hill under this Façade Improvement Program will not be eligible for any other town financing program.

Eligible Façade Rehabilitation Activities

The types of activities which may be done include the following:

- Minor Masonry work
- Storefront and Doors
- Awnings
- Masonry Pointing
- Power Washing
- Painting
- Signage
- Lighting
- Windows
- Landscape Improvements including plantings, sidewalks and exterior patios
- ADA improvements in conjunction with façade work

These improvements must be made to the building façade, which is visible from the Silas Deane Highway.

Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to the following:

- Rehabilitation expenses incurred prior to application submittal, review and approval
- Property acquisition/mortgages
- Mortgage refinancing
- Cost of borrowing (loan interest & fees)
- Permit fees
- Construction and design or new buildings or additions to existing structures
- Wages paid to the applicant or members of applicant's family for construction work
- Interior renovation expenses
- Any portion of expenses for which the applicant pays a contractor in merchandise or service in lieu of cash
- roof replacement
- paving and line striping
- security grills

Program Procedures

A. Marketing Phase

- 1. The Town will mail notice or will conduct a personal visit to property owners on the Silas Deane Highway.
- 2. The Town will distribute flyers to businesses. A list is maintained of interested parties. in the Economic Development Office located on the 2nd floor of Town Hall)
- 3. The Town will distribute application materials to all interested parties (available in the Economic Development Department located on the 2nd floor of Town Hall).

B. Façade Improvement Committee

- 1. The Façade Improvement Committee shall be formed to review and decide on all application requests under this program.
- 2. The Façade Improvement Committee shall be composed of the Economic Development Director (who shall also be the Façade Coordinator), the Director of Planning & Building, and the Town Engineer. The Committee may seek advice and guidance from other sources to assist in the review of applications.
- 3. The Façade Improvement Committee will meet as needed to review and act on applications.

C. Application, Approval and Payment Process

- 1. Interested business/commercial property owners may contact the Economic Development Office for program application forms and design guidelines and program requirements.
- 2. The applicant prepares and submits an application to the Economic Development Office with all necessary documentation (color) photographs of the existing façade, Town Assessor's Card, Tax Affidavit, a general description of the desired work, deed (s), lease agreements and other documents as deemed necessary by the Economic Development Director). If the Tax Affidavit disposition is favorable, the applicant may continue with the process.
- 3. The Façade Coordinator and the Town's consultant architect meet with the property Owner/applicant to discuss program guidelines and design features. A concept plan is prepared after a site visit.
- 4. Once the concept plan is completed by the Town's consultant architect, the Architect, applicant and Façade Coordinator meet to discuss the plan and possible

costs.

- 5. The Economic Development Office refers the application and a copy of the concept plan to the CT Historical Commission for review and comment. This may take up to 30 days.
- 6. The applicant then secures three (3) detailed, written estimates from CT licensed qualified contractors for each component of the project and submits them to the Economic Development Office. The Committee may waive, with the approval of the CT Department of Economic & Community Development, the requirement to secure three (3) cost estimates if documentation is submitted substantiating the efforts made, and the inability to obtain, three (3) cost estimates. The contractor's estimates shall include a list of other similar projects completed by the contractor, their costs and contact information.
- 7. The Economic Development Office refers the application with cost estimates to the Façade Improvement Committee for review.

The Committee may invite an applicant to a meeting to discuss their renovation plans and answer questions. If the application is complete and the project eligible, the Committee may act on the application. The Committee may approve the application as proposed; approve the application with modifications in accordance with the guide lines; deny the application or; table the application pending submittal of additional information.

The Committee may reject one or all of the contractor's estimates if, in the opinion of the Committee, the contractor is not qualified or the estimated price is comparatively more than or less than the other cost estimates submitted by the applicant.

8. Once the Committee makes a final decision on an application, a Letter of Agreement is issued by the Economic Development Office stating the Committee's decision, funding commitment (if approved) and conditions.

The Letter of Agreement must be signed by the property owner(s) (and applicant if different from the property owner) and filed in the Rocky Hill Land Records prior to commencement of work.

If approved, the applicant moves to the next step. If the application is denied or reduced scope is necessary, the applicant may work with the Committee to modify the project accordingly and resubmit revised plans, reduced scope of work and new cost estimates.

D. Construction Phase

1. The applicant and the Façade Coordinator will have a pre-construction meeting to finalize project details and to execute the Letter of Agreement. The Façade Coordinator, who may refer a decision to the Committee, must authorize any modifications to the originally approved renovation plans in writing. Project modifications must be within the limits of the Committee's original funding commitment. Any proposed expenses in

- excess of the original funding commitment must be reviewed and acted upon by the Committee prior to the work being performed.
- 2. Contractors must secure the proper permits. Proof of all required permits and approvals must be provided to the Economic Development Office before the Façade Coordinator authorizes commencement of work.
- 3. Renovation project begins.
- 4. Façade Coordinator and pertinent Town Staff monitor construction for on-going compliance with approved renovation plans.
- 5. Upon completion of work, the applicant shall provide the Façade Coordinator with complete documentation that the approved renovation expenses are paid (cancelled checks, paid in full invoices, contractor's sworn statements, sub-contractor's waivers of lien)
- 6. The Façade Coordinator will conduct an inspection of the project with the assistance of pertinent Town Staff and the consultant architect (if warranted).
- 7. If the renovation is found complete and satisfactory, and the contractor issues a one (1) year warranty for quality of work and materials, the Façade Coordinator will forward written verification summarizing actual project expenses and recalculation of the rebate amount accordingly to the Committee for review and to authorize distribution of rebate money to the applicant.



TOWN OF ROCKY HILL

761 OLD MAIN STREET ROCKY HILL, CT 06067

Economic Development Office 860-258-7717

SILAS DEANE REVITALIZATION FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM APPLICATION

Instruction: Please complete all items carefully and accurately to the best of your knowledge. Return to: Economic Development Office, 761 Old Main St. Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Mai	ling Address:	City:	
State	e:Zip:	Phone	
]	PROPERTY INFORMATIO	<u>ON</u>	
Add	lress of Subject Property:		
•	Number and Type of Commercial Uses:		
	Name of Business (es) and B	Susiness Owner (s) or Merchants (s):	

Other Comments:	Subject Property:
FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT (S) REQUEST	
Give a general description of the type of improvement	t (s) being requested:
I certify that the information in this application is Improvement Program.	true and I agree to participate in the Façade
Owner (s) Signature (Must be Notarized)	Date
State of County of	
Subscribed and sworn to before me thisday	y of200
Notary Public	
My Commission Expires:	
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION	

Please submit 4 copies the following items along with the application form:

- Copy of deed documents for subject property.
- Complete the attached Tax Affidavit showing that all Town taxes due on all property owned by the same owner and return to:

Economic Development Office 761 Old Main Street Rocky Hill, CT 06067

- Copy of Certificate of Insurance on subject property.
- Copy of lease (s) between owner and merchant (s) or business person (s), if applicable.
- Copy of Assessor's property card
- Color photographs of property & buildings